

SCRIPT OF VIDEO NARRATION JUDAISM

VOICE 1: “Hear, O Israel the Lord our God, the Lord is One. You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. Take to heart these words with which I charge you this day. Impress them upon your children, recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead. Inscribe them on your doorposts of your house and on your gates. Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.”

THE TORAH

NARRATOR: The *Shema*, recited by devout Jews in their daily prayers, expresses the creed of Judaism. It is found in the *Torah*. The *Torah*, in its narrowest definition, refers to the Five Books of Moses, the first five books of the Old Testament, the sacred scriptures of the Jews. Sometimes called “The Law,” the *Torah* was passed down from Moses and it tells the story of a people, a land, a way of life, and a relationship with God. In a broader sense, the *Torah* embraces the whole of authentic Jewish teaching.

RABBI DAVID RUBIN: “Judaism became official on Mount Sinai. Judaism started with Abraham, continued with Isaac and Jacob. Jacob had the twelve sons who became the twelve tribes. They went down to Egypt and after 210 years they left Egypt and forty years later they entered into Israel after previously having received the *Torah* at Har Sinai, on Mount Sinai. And the forty years they spent in the desert were forty years of purification where they had to leave the evils and the impurities of Egypt where they had been immersed for 210 years and spend forty years in a desert atmosphere cleansing their souls and their minds and their bodies and studying *Torah* in preparation for entering into the land of Israel.”

NARRATOR: The *Torah* is one of the four cornerstones of Jewish faith. It is a living law handed down from God to Moses on Mount Sinai and passes onward from generation to generation.

RABBI MORDECAI TWERSKI: “Western culture views humility as being a putdown. For us to be able to recognize that our limited perceptions can be expanded to include a perception of the infinite, the first step that we have to be able to accomplish is not to see ourselves as a barrier. So, therefore, we talk about *Torah*, that gift of knowledge as being the perception not of a set of disciplines, but a perception of the entire structure of creation.”

NARRATOR: A central part of the service in a synagogue is the reading of the *Torah*. The scroll is first paraded around the room so that the congregation can see, touch, and kiss it. It is then opened and read. In the *Torah* are found the other cornerstones of Judaism: the land. . .

VOICE 3: ". . .go forth from your native land and from your father’s house to a land that I will show you. . ."

NARRATOR: . . .the people. . .

VOICE 3: "...and I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you. . ."

NARRATOR: . . .and the love of God.

VOICE 3: "...you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might."

RABBI MORDECAI TWERSKI: “So, therefore, *Torah* is not a religion. *Torah* is life and we don’t define them as being separate.

NARRATOR: The *Torah*, the land, the people, and the love of God have bound Jews together through exile and captivity, defeat and dispersion, and centuries of persecution in many lands.

THE HOLOCAUST AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL

NARRATOR: The Holocaust occurred during the Second World War when millions were held captive and murdered because they were Jews. From 1933 to 1945, nearly six million Jews were killed by the Nazis.

RABBI MORDECAI TWERSKI: “Evil achieves its purpose by our perceiving through it, or overcoming the challenge. It is specifically there as the obstacle. We can get caught in the obstacle, but it is only an obstacle with the specific intent that we overcome it. Therefore, evil can never overcome good. There is never the threat that evil will dominate the world. Evil will be as perfect of a challenge as we are capable of overcoming. And that’s as creation as a whole and that’s for every individual.”

NARRATOR: When the war was over, in 1945, those who survived the camps, as well as other Jews from all over the world, moved to Palestine, a predominantly Arab country at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea, and fought to establish the state of Israel.

RABBI DAVID RUBIN: “God said to us, it is yours, it isn’t theirs. And that’s the Jewish position. We have this land because we have a mandate from God and this is the land that we are destined to inherit, and this is the land that we are destined to fulfill our function and role as the Jewish nation.”

NARRATOR: In 1947, Palestine was divided by the United Nations and Israel was declared a state. The Jews finally had a homeland for the first time since 70 C.E. From all over the world, Jews that had been living in other cultures moved to Israel. What the Jews found when they arrived in Israel was a desert land with a very limited capacity for agriculture. A few collective farms, called *kibbutzim*, had been established by early settlers and these were used as models for a great many others. By working together toward the common goal of making the country self-sustaining, and with limitless human energy and resourcefulness, the Jews made the desert bloom. They developed new agricultural technologies, and communities where all shared equally the responsibilities and rewards. Today, these communities continue to provide Israel with much of its agricultural produce and provide a powerful bond with the land for their residents.”

JERUSALEM AND THE WAILING WALL

NARRATOR: In Jerusalem, the Wailing Wall is the focal point

of much of Jewish life. This is the only remaining part of the temple complex, which dates back to the days of Solomon and was destroyed twice, the last time in 70 C.E., almost two thousand years ago. The Jews believe the Messiah will appear here to bring peace and harmony to the world. And at that time, the temple will be rebuilt as a house of prayer for all the people on earth. In Judaism is found the roots of two of the other world's major religions: Christianity and Islam. Jesus grew up as a Jew in Palestine. He worshipped in the synagogue and followed a radical Jewish leader, John the Baptist. Jesus emphasized mercy and compassion and encouraged his followers to adhere to the high moral and ethical standards that are the foundation of both Judaism and Christianity.

Much of Mohammed's knowledge of religion came from Jewish sages who lived during his time. The Koran makes reference to a number of Old Testament prophets, among them Noah, Lot, Abraham, Moses, and David and, of course, the central idea of one God is common to all three faiths. In Jerusalem, these three faiths share and dispute the same ground. Within a relatively small area in old Jerusalem, Solomon build the first temple of the Jews. Jesus preached, was crucified, and, Christians believe, ascended into heaven, and Muslims believe that Mohammed took his night journey from Jerusalem to heaven where Islam teaches that he visited the throne of Allah.

RITUALS AND FESTIVALS

NARRATOR: In the *Torah* is found the basis for the major rituals and festivals of Judaism. The Sabbath, from sunset on Friday through sunset on Saturday, is the most important of all holy days.

VOICE 3: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. . ."

RABBI DAVID RUBIN: "There are three practical commandments which are absolutely essential to fulfill a basic Jewish life. And those are family purity; *kashrut*, the dietary laws; and *Shabbos*, *Shabbot*. We cease from creative activity once a week in order to remind ourselves, and to refresh our memories, and to give honor to God, who is the ultimate creator of the universe. The *Shinah* is in some way the feminine aspect of God.

In fact, *Shabbos* is called “*Shabbot Hamalca*,” the “Queen Sabbath, Sabbath Queen.” And that is ushered in various stages, but the ultimate pinnacle is, I suppose, the lighting of the candles by the woman of the house. When she says the blessings on the candles, that light of that candle signifies the presence of the *Shinah*, of the sabbath queen in the home.”

NARRATOR: The Jewish calendar year begins in late September or early October. Judaism’s most solemn festivals are observed at this time in the autumn of the year. The Days of Awe celebration begins on the eve of *Rosh Hashanah*, with the blowing of the *Shofar*.

VOICE 1: "Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us by your commandments, and has instructed us to hear the call of the Shofar."

NARRATOR: *Rosh Hashanah* is the Jewish New Year, a commemoration of the beginning of the world and a time when individual worshipers began a ten-day period of repentance, renewal, and remembrance. The Days of Awe end on *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, a time to pray for forgiveness for one’s self and others. In the Jewish part of Jerusalem on *Yom Kippur*, the streets are completely deserted. Everyone is worshipping at a synagogue.

RABBI MORDECAI TWERSKI: “What we’re saying is that *Torah* is life and life is *Torah*. And therefore we have the statement in the *Talmud* that says, "Had God not given the *Torah* on Sinai, with the 613 commandments in there, we would have been obliged to go out and learn them from nature.”

NARRATOR: The next festival on the Jewish calendar is *Sukkoth*, the Feast of Booths, which recalls ancient harvest festivals and the way in which the Israelites lived during their forty years in the desert on their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. *Sukkoth* is also celebrated in the synagogue. People purchase perfect examples of the four plants specified in the *Torah*. *Sukkoth* booths, such as this one on a *kibbutz* in Northern Israel, are built by families each year. During the service, the plants are waved in the hand following the commands of Leviticus: "And

ye shall take... the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of thick trees and willows of the brook and ye shall rejoice before the Lord."

RABBI DAVID RUBIN: "Being Jewish is a full time occupation, that is the purpose of life. And in order to do that, of course, one needs to make a living. That is the Jewish philosophy. Its not that one is, let's say, a doctor and he also happens to be an Orthodox doctor, or a Conservative doctor, or a Reformed doctor, or a Christian doctor. In Judaism, it is first and foremost that he's a Jew, and in order to support his wife and family, he works as a doctor."

NARRATOR: *Hanukkah*, the Feast of Light, is a time for remembering, too. *Hanukkah* is observed in celebration of the time when the Maccabees reclaimed Jerusalem from the Syrians. The *Hanukkah* candles are lit to recall the rekindling of the Temple light. According to legend, the Maccabees found only enough holy oil in the temple to keep the lights burning for one day, but that one jar miraculously kept the light burning for eight days and eight nights, until the priests could prepare enough oil to keep it burning thereafter. The *Hanukkah* candles symbolize the light of religious freedom. The Exodus from bondage in Egypt is also celebrated on *Pesach*, or Passover, a time for remembering.

CHILD: "Why is this night different from all other nights?"

WOMAN: "We were slaves in Egypt and the Lord our Eternal brought us with a mighty hand."

NARRATOR: Five centuries of struggle for religious freedom is commemorated by a three-week period of semi-mourning, which ends on *Tisha B'Av*, the ninth day of the month of *Av*, a day of fasting and mourning over the destruction of the Temple and over the tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people throughout their history.

RABBI MORDECAI TWERSKI: "God therefore doesn't cause tragedy to happen. We as mankind do. We are the ones who are the fluctuating variable. If we would balance ourselves con-

sciously with all of the other variables of creation, the world would be in perfect balance and there would be no suffering.”

NARRATOR: At the age of thirteen, Jewish young people accept the duties, obligations, and privileges of an adult Jew.

At his *Bar Mitzvah* ceremony, the initiate is recognized as a "Man of Duty," or a "Son of the Commandments." A young woman celebrates the *Bat Mitzvah*, and becomes a "Daughter of the Commandments," to introduce her into the adult community.

RABBI DAVID RUBIN: "Bar Mitzvah is Hebrew, and it means, it's actually Aramaic, "bar" is "ben." In Hebrew, "ben" means "son of." "*Bar Mitzvah*" means "son of the *Mitzvah*." In other words, this person, this young man, is now an obligated Jew to fulfill the commandments."

NARRATOR: The young person studies *Torah* and learns about the laws that govern Jewish life in preparation for their *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*. They will read from the *Torah* in front of the community at the celebration. In addition to its serious side, the *Bar Mitzvah* or *Bat Mitzvah* is a joyous family occasion and a time for congratulations and gift giving, for it is the beginning of adulthood and full membership in an ancient faith that began more than 5,000 years ago.

SECTS

NARRATOR: There are several different sects in Judaism. The most orthodox are the *Hassidim*, or "Mystical Jews." Many of them dress in the same way as their ancestors in Europe did a hundred years ago and they follow the Commandments very strictly. Although it is quite unusual, there are some *Hassidim* who combine their religious traditions with artistic representation to express their mystical view of life.

HASSIDIC: "Basically, when you see a person dressed in black in the street, you not always can take for granted he was always like that. But, nevertheless, as an artist you can be black and still love color."

NARRATOR: In the Orthodox synagogue, men and women sit in separate areas. The men conduct the service while the women watch. The Reformed sect on the other hand expresses a much more modern view in dress, worship service, and customs. In the past, the role of women in Judaism was largely confined to keeping the home in accordance with Jewish law. While this is still true in Orthodox Judaism, in the Reformed sect, women play a central part in the synagogue as well.

RABBI TIRZAH FIRESTONE: "The thing that excites me so much about Judaism right now is the women in it. I see the face of Judaism being transformed by its women. And there's all sorts of ways that are being brought about by women rabbis now that are changing the liturgy, changing the way we daven, the way we pray, to make it more soulful, to make it more alive and refreshing. So that when you leave you really feel like you've done something exquisite. Reformed Judaism was brought over to the United States later on and now, as you know, it is a large denomination. It is a denomination that basically says, "You keep your Jewish heritage in the way that you feel fit. And it is not so important whether you drive on the Sabbath or whether you eat pork or don't eat pork. What's important is that you stay together as a community and that you make Judaism utterly relevant to modern life."

NARRATOR: The most recent transformation within Judaism is the emergence of the Jewish Renewal movement. Begun in the 1960s, Jewish Renewal incorporates some of the ancient mystical elements of Hassidic Judaism bringing its followers an opportunity for a direct experience of God.

RABBI ZALMAN SCHACHTER-SHALOMI: "Imagine I ask you the question, 'Who are you?' and you will answer, 'Give me your name,' and I say, 'Thank you. Who are you?' and each time I ask deeper and deeper and deeper and deeper. And then you say, 'I am consciousness.' And I say, 'Thank you. Who are you?' 'I am the source of consciousness.' "Thank you. Who are you?" Ultimately, you have to say, 'I am God.' In this form, but I am God. That notion of recognizing that we are children of God, like we are snippets of the great hologram, you know, that we contain in ourselves that spark of the living God, that

recognition, together with a celebration of the body, and of the heart, and of the insights that come from the mind, that basically created the matrix out of which Jewish Renewal came. We do a lot of singing and dancing because when the body is awakened and the heart wakes up, too, and then the heart wants to express itself, and all of us, if we get the opportunity to dance when we aren't watched by other people, everyone is a ballet dancer, you know?"

NARRATOR: Other elements are an openness to the wisdom of other religious traditions such as Buddhism and Sufism, equality of women and men in shaping the future of Judaism, and a concern for healing the environment. This movement emphasizes a joyful approach to religion and spirituality with chanting, dance, and meditation, as well as traditional prayer and study of *Torah*.

SUMMARY

NARRATOR: In many ways, Judaism is a religion of remembrance, but it is a religion that looks forward, too. After the Roman conquest of Israel in 70 C.E., the Jews were scattered throughout the world, but they carried their beliefs with them and they still teach their children to love and respect the *Torah*. It is a faith that sent Abraham in search of the Promised Land, now the spiritual homeland for more than 14 million people. It is a faith that takes its way of life from the words of Moses, honors its kings and its prophets and sages by rereading and reverencing their writings, and carries on a continuing dialogue that began in exile, when the men of the Great Synagogue began to interpret the Law of the *Torah*, and wrote down their commentaries in the *Talmud*. It is a faith that binds people of many lands together with the common belief in the people and the land of their ancestors and the lives and words of their founders and the great law of love.

RABBI MORDECAI TWERSKI: "If we can change the human beings we come in contact with, we will eventually change the sensitivity and awareness of the world. If we can change the awareness of the world, suffering does not need to exist."

VOICE 1: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.

You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and will all your might."